

Minnesota congressional delegation reacts to Bush's speech

Minnesota delegation reaction to President Bush's State of the Union address Tuesday:

Sen. Mark Dayton, D-Minn.:

"My mother taught me when I was growing up that actions speak louder than words. Tonight was a night for words, and he put a lot of good ones in his speech. There was broad bipartisan support for much of what he said, but the devils and the angels are in the details."

Sen. Norm Coleman, R-Minn.:

"Tonight, the President pushed America in a new direction with a strong energy initiative that will move us toward drastic reductions in energy imports by tapping into our enormous potential in renewable energy. With 16 ethanol plants, 3 biodiesel plants, boundless wind energy, and a coal gasification plant on the way, Minnesota can play a key role in ending our dependency on foreign oil."

Rep. Gil Gutknecht, R-Minn. (First District):

"I was delighted to hear the President acknowledge the need for an aggressive plan for energy independence. It was clear from his remarks that he understands the value of renewable energy. ...

"I'm pleased that the President acknowledged the progress being made in Iraq. We need to be reminded that good things are happening on the other side of the world because of the sacrifices of our brave Americans in uniform."

Rep. John Kline, R-Minn. (Second District):

"The state of our nation's economy is very strong. Over 4 million new jobs have been created in the last two years. Current unemployment is below the average in the 1990s, 1980s and 1970s.

"We have had 10 consecutive quarters of growth above 3 percent. Home ownership is at an all-time high, and is accompanied by low inflation. Consumer confidence is at a three-year high. That is why we need to extend the tax cuts to avoid a large tax increase that would slow the economy and destroy jobs."

Rep. Jim Ramstad, R-Minn. (Third District):

"I applaud the President's call to change the tone in Washington and restore bipartisanship and civility at the Capitol and the White House.

"I'm pleased the President emphasized health care reform, as it's about time we put health care at the top of our domestic agenda. If ever a problem called for a bipartisan solution, it's the rising costs and diminishing access to quality health care."

Rep. Betty McCollum, D-Minn. (Fourth District):

"We heard a message once again of stay the course and I, along with a majority of Americans, feel that our country has been going in the wrong direction. He talked about staying the course in the war in Iraq, continuing with tax cuts, and irresponsible spending that's going to put our nation into a trillion dollars of debt. He ignored the seriousness of the national health care crisis, and he did nothing to address what leadership role he's going to take with all the corruption that is endemic of the Republican leadership here in Washington."

Rep. Martin Sabo, D-Minn. (Fifth District):

"In addition to his disastrous Iraq war, President Bush's domestic policies are failing Americans. The unrestrained trade deficit, an exploding budget mess, and a growing wage gap all threaten to undermine the American dream. ... He has presided over a trade deficit that will top \$710 billion in 2005 and a federal budget deficit estimated to be at least \$337 billion in 2006. Additionally, since this administration took office, we have seen median household income decline by \$1,600 and 6 million more Americans lack health insurance. In these terms, the state of the union is not good."

Rep. Mark Kennedy, R-Minn. (Sixth District):

"I'm very pleased to see the president mention line-item veto, which I am the author of. We have to give that to presidents, whether Republican or Democrat, so they can help cut the junk out of there, hold Congress accountable, and get spending under control. ... I'm also very pleased to see that he brought up the need to have math and science professionals get into the classrooms. I am also the author, along with Rush Holt, of the Teachers for Tomorrow's Careers, that facilitates doing just that by making the costs they incur to do that, deductible."

Rep. Collin Peterson, D-Minn. (Seventh District):

"I thought it was a good speech, positive, and it would have probably been good if he would have given that speech a year ago. We wouldn't have gone through all this turmoil this last year - the idea that he's going to work on a bipartisan basis on Medicare and Social Security and so forth, which did not happen at all. ... Maybe if the President is serious about this and provides some leadership, maybe that'll help us get to where we need to get on that."

Rep. Jim Oberstar, D-Minn. (Eighth District):

"Very early on in the talk, there was this subliminal reference to the September 11 attack coming from a source that is spreading terrorism - clearly referencing Iraq, which had nothing to do with September 11. He's running that theme again. ... He's playing the fear string in America. That I found to be the overriding concern I have about his presentation."

-- Aaron Blake and Rob Hotakainen contributed to this report.